

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 02985 030339Z

73

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 L-03 MC-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01

AID-20 IGA-02 DRC-01 /118 W
----- 010710

R 011111Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 289

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

SECDEF

CINCPAC

CNO

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2985

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE , US

SUBJ: PURCHASE OF SHIP BY SRI LANKA NAVY

REF COLOMBO 2775

1. WE HAVE RECENTLY HAD INFORMAL INDICATIONS FROM SENIOR CEYLONSE NAVAL OFFICERS THAT THEY WOULD WELCOME OFFER OF SMALLER VESSEL THAN ORIGINALLY REQUESTED AND THAT SPECIFICATIONS IN FOREIGN MINISTRY AIDE-MEMOIRE OF 3 AUG (COLOMBO 1980) SHOULD NO LONGER GOVERN SELECTION OF SUITABLE SHIP. THESE INDICATIONS COME FROM THOSE WHO DO NOT WISH TO ACCEPT SOVIET OFFER, ATTRACTIVE THOUGH IT IS.

2. WE WELCOME THAT SMALLER PATROL-TYPE SHIP, SUCH AS US COAST GUARD WPB (95 FOOT CUTTER) WOULD BE APPROPRIATE. IT WOULD BE KIND OF VESSEL SRI LANKA NAVY COULD OPERATE AND MAINTAIN, AS OPPOSED TO FRIGATE IT DOES NOT REALLY NEED, AND MIGHT BE LESS COSTLY.

3. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT GSL HAVE SOME ALTERNATIVE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 COLOMB 02985 030339Z

TO SOVIET SHIP OFFER. WHILE WE CONINTUE PREFER THAT BRITISH OR

OTHER WESTERN POWER BE SOURCE OF SUCH ALTERNATIVE, SO FAR NO ONE HAS BEEN WILLING OR ABLE TO COME UP WITH SUITABLE SHIP. IN ADDITION, GSL APPARENTLY HAS IMPRESSION THAT UNITED STATES IS SIMPLY "NOT INTERESTED."

4. WE RECOMMEND, THEREFORE, THAT EFFORT BE MADE IMMEDIATELY TO IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE PATROL-TYPE VESSEL THAT WE COULD OFFER TO GSL, EVEN IF IT IS NOT CLOSELY COMPETITIVE WITH SOVIET OFFER ON SALE OR CREDIT TERMS. IF GSL ACCEPTED IT, IT WOULD BE USEFUL SHIP FOR SLN (AND WOULD IN ADDITION BE HELPFUL INCREASE IN GSL NARCOTICS CONTROL CAPABILITY). IF IT DID NOT, BECAUSE OF HARD SALE TERMS OR OTHER REASON, WE WOULD AT LEAST HAVE MADE OFFER AND DEMONSTRATED US INTEREST IN SRI LANKA'S NEEDS. AT MINIMUM, OFFST MIGHT PROVIDE CEYLONese POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY TO TURN DOWN BOTH SOVIET AND US OFFERS ON GROUND OF STRINGENT GSL ECONOMIC SITUATION. THAT OUTCOME WOULD BE REASONABLE FROM OUR STANDPOINT, AND INEXPENSIVE PAKISTANI OVERHAUL OF EXISTING FLAGSHIP "GAJABAHU", MIGHT THEN BE REVIEWED AS TEMPORARY SOLUTION.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE WASHINGTON'S REACTION SOONEST.
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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